

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS ON OUTER BANKS PRESERVATION PROPOSAL

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold public meetings May 8 and 9 on a proposal to preserve and protect as much as 20,000 acres of the Outer Banks of Virginia and upper North Carolina, currently being subdivided in some areas for residential development.

The area provides wintering habitat for about 35 percent of the Atlantic Flyway waterfowl population and is used by several endangered and threatened species, including the peregrine falcon, bald eagle, and the loggerhead sea turtle.

According to Northeastern Regional Director Howard N. Larsen, the public meetings will be held at the Virginia Beach City Council Chamber on May 8 at 7:30 p.m. and at the Currituck County High School, Currituck, North Carolina, on May 9 at 7:30 p.m.

"The purpose of these meetings is to seek comment and information from the general public before we prepare a draft environmental impact statement on the proposal. We are attempting to bring the public into our decisionmaking process at a very early stage and reduce delay in reaching decisions," Larsen said.

The preliminary assessment of the proposal was released several weeks ago outlining five alternative actions that could be taken by the FWS to protect fish and wildlife resources associated with the Outer Banks from Virginia to the Dare County, North Carolina, line. The five alternatives ranged from no action taken by the FWS to purchase of the entire Outer Banks north of the village of Corolla, North Carolina, and the wetlands south of that village to the Dare County, North Carolina, line. Also included in this alternative would be the purchase or exchange of portions of False Cape State Park from the State of Virginia. The park adjoins the 4,500-acre Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge operated by FWS.

The meetings will be conducted with a moderator and panel composed of representatives from the Federal, State, and local agencies most directly involved with the Service proposal. Copies of the preliminary assessment will be made available to the public at city libraries in Virginia Beach and at the Currituck County Courthouse in Currituck, North Carolina, prior to the dates of the public meetings.

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